DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 396 040 UD 030 996

AUTHOR Useem, Elizabeth; And Others
TITLE Reforming Alone: Barriers to Organizational Learning in Urban School Change Initiatives.
PUB DATE Apr 96
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (New York, NY, April 8-12, 1996).
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Educational Change; Educational Practices; Elementary Secondary Education; *Instructional Leadership; *Principals; Professional Development; Program Evaluation; School Districts; *School Personnel; Synthesis; Unions; *Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS *Philadelphia School District PA; Reform Efforts; *Social Capital

ABSTRACT

The idea of civic engagement among school staffs is explored with the aim of understanding why reform initiatives often fail to be initiated fully in urban schools. This synthesis of findings across nine separate program evaluations conducted for the Philadelphia Education Fund (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania) was prompted by the recognition that the same barriers to reform emerged repeatedly. Five of the evaluations examined change efforts aimed at whole schools or significant units within schools, and two examined reform projects with multiple components in middle schools. Two studies assessed the impact of district-wide professional development efforts in mathematics and science, and two additional evaluations examined the impact of curriculum development efforts by teachers. It is argued that the concept of social capital is fundamental to understanding why the same reform effort succeeds in some schools and not in others. Many factors explained the pattern of incomplete implementation of reforms. Among the most important, with the potential to make or break the project, were support from the principal, turnover of the principal, instability of the reform or professional development team, and teachers' work union rules. The isolation of school professional personnel undertaking reform stood out, and the prevalence of practices restricting the development of social capital was marked. An appendix lists the evaluation and documentation reports conducted for the Philadelphia Education Fund. (Contains 1 chart and 51 references.) (SLD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 396 040

Reforming Alone: Barriers to Organizational Learning in Urban School Change Initiatives

Elizabeth Useem
Philadelphia Education Fund

Jolley Bruce Christman
Research for Action

Eva Gold
Research for Action

Elaine Simon
University of Pennsylvania

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Elizabeth L. Useem
Philadelphia Ed. Fund

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Paper Presented at the Annual Meeting of the

American Educational Research Association

New York City

April, 1996

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

TM025354 w030996

"Professional isolation is the enemy of any program trying to truly serve students at risk."[1]
Sam Stringfield

Researchers have recently highlighted the importance of civic engagement in the larger political and social culture in promoting democratic processes and economic development (Fukuyama, 1995; Putnam, 1993,1995a,b). They argue that an active participatory culture characterized by extensive interlocking civic associations among peers leads to social trust and trust, in turn, makes it easier for people to collaborate to accomplish common goals. Others have applied this concept to business organizations and have found that firms characterized by extensive interpersonal interaction and trusting relationships operate more effectively (Katzenbach and Smith, 1993; Lawler, 1992; Nadler, Gerstein, and Shaw, 1992). This notion of "social capital"--defined by Putnam as the "norms, networks, and trust" existing among citizens and/or some other defined group--is increasingly viewed as an asset that is critical to the well-being and viability of communities and organizational life. Putnam's description and analysis of an apparent decline in America's social capital, captured in his metaphor "bowling alone," has resonated with policy makers and pundits (Morin *et al.*, 1996).

In this paper, we explore the idea of civic engagement among school staffs within the school building with the aim of understanding why reform initiatives so often fail to be fully implemented in urban schools. This synthesis of findings across nine separate program evaluations conducted for the Philadelphia Education Fund[2] was prompted by our realization that the same barriers to reform, many of them related to staff community life, were emerging repeatedly in one evaluation after another. Thus, we set out to identify the cluster of policies and structures that have the effect of depleting or preventing the formation of social capital among teachers and administrators. We draw on these studies to show how the convergence of multiple policies and established practices conspire to prevent or break up the norms, networks, and social trust needed to transform schools into vibrant learning organizations.

Coleman was the first to fully spell out the idea of social capital (1988, 1990), and he and others have defined and applied this concept to social linkages connecting students, their teachers, and their surrounding community (Bryk, Lee, and Holland, 1993; Coleman and Hoffer, 1987) or to

[1] S.C. Stringfield. (1994). Identifying and addressing organizational barriers to reform. In R.J. Rossi (Ed.), *Schools and students at risk* (p. 289). New York: Teachers College Press.

[2] The Philadelphia Education Fund is a private non-profit organization engaged in school reform in the School District of Philadelphia. The organization was created as a result of a 1995 merger between the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative and PATHS/PRISM: The Philadelphia Partnership for Education.

social supports for students within the family (Lee, 1993; Schneider, 1993). Scholars have more recently turned their attention to the variation in the fund of social capital existing among staff members across schools and its connection to school reform efforts. Schneider and Bryk (1995a,b), drawing on extensive data from the Chicago school reform effort, have elaborated a theoretical model explaining why school organizations, like democracies, function better when staff members have a well-developed associational life in schools. They stress the importance of dense and stable networks of communication among teachers and administrators in the development of trusting relationships. Trust, they argue, makes schools more efficient by enabling school staffs to resolve conflicts quickly, speed flows of information, reign in undesirable behaviors among colleagues, delegate authority, and address racial and ethnic divisions. Where trust levels are high, teachers are more loyal to the school, more likely to reach out to parents, and to experiment with new teaching methods. In sum, Schneider and Bryk contend that "the fabric of social relationships is foundational for school improvement."

We argue here, following Schneider and Bryk, that for school reformers engaged in change initiatives, the concept of social capital is fundamental to understanding why the same reform effort founders in some schools and succeeds in others. Strategies undertaken with the goal of renewing or restructuring schools or significantly altering teaching and learning assume that organizational learning will occur during the course of the initiative. This kind of learning requires that staffs engage in a continuous process of gathering and analyzing information and modifying strategies as a result. Evaluators have learned that ongoing feedback with participants and sustained inquiry among them are an important component of reform (Cochran-Smith and Lytle,1993; Cousins and Earl, 1992). To do this, organizations must have structures and work rules that allow their staffs to meet together frequently to reflect on the complex and non-linear change processes characterizing school reform initiatives (Fullan, 1996). Without supports for a rich "civil society" within the school building, the trust needed to facilitate cooperation cannot grow, and meaningful organizational learning is frustrated.

Prior Research

A growing body of evidence supports the view that the existence of a strong professional community among teachers and administrators enhances student learning, particularly for students who are deemed "at-risk"(Lee and Smith, 1996; Louis, Kruse, and Marks, in press; and Louis, Marks, and Kruse, 1995; McLaughlin and Talbert, 1993; Talbert and McLaughlin, 1994; Stringfield and Teddlie, 1991; Newmann and Wehlage, 1995). Strong teacher professional communities are marked by ongoing opportunities for reflective dialogue about student work and instructional methods, practices such as peer observation that "deprivatize" teaching, joint work on curriculum and other matters, and shared norms focused on student learning (Kruse, Louis, and Bryk, 1994). Teacher disengagement from the collegial life in schools is now regarded by many researchers as a threat to student success (Stringfield, 1994).

Why do students learn more in schools where teachers have close working relationships? Newmann and Wehlage, summarizing the results of studies undertaken by the Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools, argue that this occurs for three principal reasons:

- students receive the same set of objectives and methods of learning from their teachers;
- teachers improve their technical competence through shared activity and reflection;
- a "culture of collective responsibility" establishes a norm of diligent work among teachers and a sense of shared accountability for student success and failure (Newmann and Wehlage, 1995, p. 30).

Moreover, Newmann and Wehlage point to the impact of teacher professional community on student effort. Students will work harder, they say, when teachers *as a group* expect students to exert themselves intellectually, take challenging courses, and attend classes where high expectations are combined with personal help and support and an atmosphere where repeated trial and error is encouraged.

Yet attempts to create and maintain such a professional community must overcome significant organizational obstacles. An extensive research literature exists on the barriers facing U.S. teachers and administrators when they attempt to collaborate and learn together. The lack of time during the school day and school year for common planning and reflection has been identified again and again as a major inhibitor of collegial work (Donahoe, 1993; Fullan and Miles, 1992; Louis and Miles, 1990; Maeroff, 1993; Purnell and Hill, 1992; Watts and Castle, 1993). The restricted opportunity to interact in U.S. schools contrasts with more plentiful opportunities in other countries (Stevenson and Stigler, 1992). Evaluators and researchers have also noted how school teams trained over the summer or on weekends are frequently separated during the school year by different schedules and assignments (McMullan, 1994; Vogel and Abrahams-Goldberg, 1994). Principals are the key people who might keep teams together and arrange common planning time, but they often fail to lend their active support to a reform initiative (see Fullan, 1991, for a review of this research). The rapid turnover of people in leadership positions--principals, team leaders, etc.--and its corrosive effect on reform efforts have been identified as implementation problems as well (Lewis, 1995; Maeroff, 1993; Marshall, 1993; Newman, 1995; Sebring, Bryk, and Easton, 1995). An atmosphere of instability among personnel is especially prevalent in urban school districts.

While some attention has been given to the issue of time, staffing turnover, and team integrity, other variables related to social capital formation have received less scrutiny. Human resource policies of school districts and work rules in teachers' union contracts play a major role in determining the availability of time for meetings and in shaping transfer and hiring policies.

Researchers and policy analysts have focused more on how individual schools and their leaders work around these policies, often engaging in ingenious forms of "creative insubordination," but have shied away from direct examination of the impact of those rules on school reform programs. An exception is Lewis's (1995) evaluation of the Edna McConnell Clark Foundation's middle school initiative.

Data and Methods

This review synthesizes results from external evaluations and internal documentation of all externally-funded school-change initiatives undertaken during the 1990s by PATHS/PRISM (prior to its merger into the Philadelphia Education Fund), in concert with the School District of Philadelphia.[3] At that point in its history, the organization had begun to move away from district-wide programs with individual teachers toward work with school teams focused on change in the school building. A review of nine such initiatives provides the opportunity to highlight findings that recur in discrete program evaluations and to place results within a broader explanatory conceptual framework. It can also serve as a vehicle for dissemination of the lessons learned from the evaluators' work. As it is, evaluations often reach just a limited audience and fade into oblivion inside the files of the sponsoring agency and funder.

Virtually all of the schools involved in these projects were located in high poverty neighborhoods in Philadelphia. The initiatives were aimed at changing school and classroom environments and thus the evaluations examined the impact of these programs on their practice and perspectives. The evaluations used a range of research methods and data sources: field observations of classroom and school staff meetings, survey questionnaires, individual interviews, focus groups, documentary evidence, data on student achievement outcomes, and internal documentation reports. (See Chart for description.)

Five of the studies examined change efforts aimed at whole schools or significant units within schools such as middle school houses or high school "charters" (schools within schools). One of these projects, the Cluster Initiative, involved curricular and governance changes in two middle schools and three elementary schools. Two evaluation reports looked at change projects with multiple components in middle schools: Partners in Change, a high profile restructuring initiative in six middle schools, and Crossing the Boundaries, a less intensive whole-school change effort in eight middle schools. Several documentation reports examined Arts Empower, an ambitious

[3] The authors have conducted a number of other studies in the School District of Philadelphia. The most recent of these include *The Five School Study : Restructuring Philadelphia's Comprehensive High Schools* by Jolley B. Christman and Pat Macpherson, 1996 (forthcoming, The Philadelphia Education Fund, commissioned by the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative) and *Making Children Larger and Cracks Smaller. The Role of a Participatory Evaluation in School Restructuring* by Eva Gold with Cameron Voss (1996, Research for Action, Philadelphia). Findings from these comprehensive studies confirm the trends reported in this paper .

Characteristics of Nine PEF Reform Initiatives: 1990-1996

Name/Funder	Objectives	Activities	Duration	Nos.Involved	Eval. Method
Algebra Project National Science Foundation	Training for middle grades math teachers to teach pre-algebra and 8th grade algebra using Univ. Chicago text series	graduate level course, monthly follow-up meetings, class sets of graphing calculators, computers for teachers, adoption of Univ. Chicago math texts	3 one year cohorts	230 middle grades teachers district-wide	telephone interviews with teachers trained in algebra in first cohort, school records of teacher assignments
Arts Empower William Penn Foundation	arts-centered interdisciplinary school renewal through curricular and organizational change	summer institutes, colloquia, school grant of $20,000, collaboration with community arts organizations, technical assistance, focus on developing a school within a school in middle schools and high schools	2 cohorts of schools for two years each plus continuation grants to most schools	18 middle, elementary and high schools; teams of 3-5 teachers attended first summer institute (2 schools eventually removed from program)	interviews with participants, survey and participant observation of summer institute participants, program documents, field observations
Caught Between Two Worlds Pew Charitable Trusts School District of Philadelphia	integration of literature and film from many cultures into middle school curricula	summer institute, follow-up meetings, curriculum writing, outreach to other staff, $5000 school grant to purchase class sets of books plus films, videos, and books for library	3 years	3 middle schools--teams of 5 from each school in summer institute that kicked off the initiative	interviews with participants, program documents
Cluster Initiative Pew Charitable Trusts School District of Philadelphia	whole school renewal with focus on curricular innovation, collegial staff culture, outreach to parents, and school based management	retreats, summer workshops by school, school grants up to $45,000, customized professional development during school year, technical assistance	4 years	5 elementary schools and 2 middle schools; entire school staff invited to participate from the start	interviews with participants, program documents, field observations, survey of participants
Crossing the Boundaries Pew Charitable Trusts School District of Philadelphia	whole school renewal through innovation in curriculum, change in school organization, and outreach to parents	summer institute, curriculum writing during school year, parent workshops, school grants up to $12,500, customized professional development in curriculum and pedagogy, self-studies	2 years	8 middle schools; teams of 5 in attendance at summer institute	3 focus groups with participants, status report of program officer, school reports
Library Power Dewitt Wallace--Readers Digest	library-centered collaborative innovation in teaching and learning,upgrading of facilities and collections, enhanced access by students, outreach to parents	summer institute for school librarians, seminars, speakers, customized professional development, library refurbishing and collection development, technical assistance	2 cohorts of schools--1 for 3 years, 1 for 2 years--continuation grant possible	16 elementary schools and 14 middle schools	Documentation reports of program officer (evaluation ongoing)
Partners in Change Pew Charitable Trusts	whole school renewal through changes in teaching and learning, school organization, governance, school climate, and outreach to parents.	summer institute, customized professional development, technical assistance, $40,000 school grants, retreats and workshops, Seminar on Integrated Curriculum, summer lab school	2 years	6 middle schools; teams of 12-15 teachers, administrators, and parents from each school in kickoff summer institute	interviews with participants and students, field observations, program documents, focus groups, shadowing students, internal status reports
Science Resource Leaders National Science Foundation	training of teams of teachers in science content, pedagogy, hands-on research, and leadership	240 hours of professional development in summer institutes, year-long independent study teams in project with industry mentor, retreats, workshops	3 years	150 teachers in teams of two from 3/4 of District's schools with middle grades	interviews with participants and students, surveys, observations, focus groups
Women in World History U.S.Department of Education	professional development and collaborative inter-disciplinary curriculum writing on women in history	summer institutes, school year seminars, curriculum research and writing, school grants of $2500 to purchase library materials, outreach to staff, visits to cultural institutions	3 years	26 teachers and librarians from 10 high schools; each school team inter-disciplinary in makeup	survey of participants, observations, interviews of participants, program documents

school renewal project centered on the arts in 18 elementary, middle, and high schools. Documentation reports on Library Power, a curricular reform project in 30 elementary and middle schools, are also included in this review.

Two studies assessed the impact of district-wide professional development efforts in mathematics and science funded by the National Science Foundation. The Algebra Project trained middle school teachers from across the District to teach eighth grade algebra. Science Resource Leaders prepared a team of two science teachers in schools with middle grades to be lead teachers in that curriculum area. Two additional evaluations examined the impact of curriculum development efforts by school-based teams of teachers: Women in World History, a curriculum-writing project with teams of teachers in eight high schools, and Caught Between Two Worlds, a multi-cultural thematic curriculum-development initiative by teams of teachers in three middle schools. (See Appendix for a list of evaluation reports.).

Because these studies varied so widely in research design, comprehensiveness, and data collection instruments, it was not technically possible to pool results from them. The following analysis, therefore, attempts to pull out key findings from the reports on dimensions bearing on social capital formation and summarize the general themes we see in the data.

The Context for the Studies

All of these multi-year reform initiatives focused on teacher professional development in one way or another. In some instances, a small number of parents and administrators were included as well. For the most part, the programs had similar components although their intensity, duration, and number of participants varied. The sequence of activities ran something like this: a series of retreats and/or a summer institute for school teams or staffs kicked off the initiative. The institutes lasted from one to four weeks. These were followed up by school-year seminars, workshops, and retreats and a second (sometimes third) summer institute. In some instances, school grants (ranging from $1500 to $20,000 a year) supported the initiative in addition to technical assistance from the Philadelphia Education Fund or its partner groups. Most of the projects were collaborative in nature, linking participants with universities, museums, community organizations, consultants, and professional associations. The philosophy undergirding the approach to professional development stressed teacher participation and leadership, intellectual challenge and stimulation, enhancement of collegial relations, and links to national educational reform groups.

These efforts required that teachers directly involved in the training return to their schools and facilitate change efforts there. A presumption that the schools had at least some minimal capacity to be learning organizations existed in the minds of program designers and funders. Obviously, in order for individuals or teams of teachers to teach new courses or redesign old ones or to engage in ambitious restructuring efforts, an administrative propensity to capitalize on the investment in

training had to exist. Likewise, a culture of collegial engagement focused on improving teaching and student learning had to register above a certain critical threshold if teachers were to learn from their peers, adapt ideas and materials, and develop and carry out an implementation plan around the identified reforms.

Program designers and participants, of course, embarked on initiatives knowing that attempts to change curriculum, pedagogy, or organizational configurations in schools in a large urban district face significant challenges. The ravaging of the region's industrial base over most of this century has left its mark on the city's public schools: a majority of children now come from homes below the poverty line. The underfunding of the District's budget (per pupil expenditures average about $6200, well below the $7700 average of surrounding suburbs) with consequent shortages of books, materials, equipment, and well-maintained buildings undermines staff and student morale and the prospects for undertaking reform projects. Added to that are the inherent difficulties of making change in a large (216,000 students, 258 schools), centrally operated district with a history of top-down bureaucratic controls combined with an employee union culture stressing strict interpretation and enforcement of seniority and other work rules. Further, as in all urban districts, school staffs view new reform efforts with a wary eye, reluctant to expend energies on what might be a passing fad. High failure rates among students add to their discouragement.

As in other large city school districts, school leaders in Philadelphia have little control over key personnel decisions, a condition that contrasts sharply with most formal organizations staffed primarily by professionals. Principals usually have only marginal input into the assignment of teachers to their buildings (teachers in the building have even less); teachers, who receive tenure after three years in most states, can be removed only with great difficulty; transfer policies are set largely by seniority rules in the teachers' union contract; and promotion and salary compensation are determined by applicants' performance on district-wide tests and the results of union negotiations respectively. Thus, principals, other administrators, and teacher-leaders cannot easily mold a school's culture and work rules through selection, retention, financial reward, or promotion of personnel, the tools that are available to leaders in most other organizations. Leaders must use their ingenuity to create other incentives and policies in order for school staffs to work above and beyond their contractual obligations to effect change.

Despite these conditions, private and public external funders embarked on ambitious professional development initiatives with the Philadelphia Education Fund and the School District with the goal of enriching teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical practice, creating professional communities within schools and across the District, and ultimately raising student achievement. We turn now to the findings from program evaluations in order to understand the ways in which a school's propensity for collegial civic engagement influenced its ability to accomplish the objectives of these reform initiatives.

Findings

Evaluation and documentation reports from these initiatives read remarkably alike. Participants praised the professional development experiences for being stimulating, creative, promoting collegiality, and being relevant to their lives in school. In many instances they described their involvement in the initiative as a transforming personal and professional experience. (Useem, Buchanan, Meyers, and Maule-Schmidt, 1995). When these evaluations probed beyond the individual level to look at school-wide effects, however, the results were mixed. Even in the most ambitious efforts, change tended to be limited to pockets of teachers within schools. Elementary schools blessed with strong principals and a cadre of teacher leaders sometimes provided exceptions to this pattern and were able to achieve schoolwide improvement. But for the most part, programs that worked intensively with individual teachers or with school teams of teachers ran up against "chronic implementation problems" (Louis and Miles, 1990) when they attempted to reach out and achieve broader changes in teaching and learning or governance in school buildings.

The degree of frustration of implementation plans varied from school to school within each project. Some schools implemented a program with a fair degree of fidelity to its objectives, in some instances moving on to take advantage of new related grants as well. A more common outcome was for schools to implement some aspects of an initiative but to fall short in others. And a few schools failed to take advantage of these externally-funded efforts altogether: although selected for participation, they may have left most of the funds unspent; failed to produce or follow up on a plan for implementation; or were unable to field a school team to show up for activities.

While many factors explain this incomplete pattern of implementation, our attention was drawn to a group of variables that appeared to be repeatedly implicated in blunting the impact of the professional development initiatives in this review. As we looked across evaluations and documentation reports, we noticed how school staff's opportunities to interact around school improvement --i.e. their opportunity for civic engagement--were constrained by the actions (or inaction) and priorities of principals, transfer policies regarding principals and teachers, and union work rules affecting time allotted to professional development.

Principals' Support

Principals' support for a reform initiative was a near-prerequisite for its success in a building. Active involvement of the principal characterized the great majority of "high implementation" schools and, conversely, outright failure of the program was associated with low principal involvement. We were surprised by the number of factors affecting program implementation that,

when scrutinized, fell under the rubric of principals' support. For example, in these programs, principals played a role in launching reform efforts by:

- overseeing the timely application for participation in an externally-funded professional development opportunity;
- encouraging the active participation of faculty in the grant-writing and planning process;
- assembling a strong school team or participating in the choice of individual faculty to become involved in an initiative;
- attending kickoff events and/or the summer planning workshops or institutes.

Once begun, it was apparent that principals could play a crucial role in the program's implementation by:

- arranging for common planning time or teaching time for team members or those who have become involved in the initiative;
- assigning team members to the same middle school house or high school small learning community;
- assigning teachers to the courses for which they had been trained by the initiative;
- influencing the use of time set aside for professional development;
- guiding materials acquisition (books, computers, etc.) critical for project support;
- routing relevant information to those active in the effort.

Principals could help sustain an initiative by:

- linking it to other reform efforts in the building, especially through the annual school improvement planning process;
- seeking additional external support;
- attending program events;
- bringing the program to the attention of all school staff.

Most importantly, we saw how some principals empowered school staffs by delegating authority (especially over a curriculum area), by creating a climate of trust and respect that allowed collegial professional community to grow, by supporting teachers to take risks, and by providing the inspiration and push needed to undertake the difficult change process. In short, the evaluators noted how some principals were able to promote collegial interaction that in turn nurtured the trust undergirding cooperation and collective accomplishment

Unfortunately, however, the majority of the principals in these schools did not provide that kind of active support for reform efforts in their buildings. Evaluations of all of the nine initiatives reported principals' inattention to the initiatives as a problem. One reason for this was that most of the programs had no particular strategy for integrating principals into the work or gaining their support. The ill-defined nature of their role on the team or lack of specific mechanisms to inform them about the work of a team limited their intervention on the program's behalf. The one program that had a deliberate strategy, however, had great difficulty engaging the majority of the principals,

and the program officer had to resort to the relatively strong-armed--but successful--tactic of asking them for a letter of explanation for their non-attendance at key program events.

In some instances, principals' low investment of time in including staff in the planning and grant-writing and in forming a strong school team doomed the program from the start. Implementation was also weakened when principals controlled the use of school grant monies accompanying a reform inititiative rather than sharing decision-making with school teams.

The presence of a reform initiative in the building did not necessarily guide principals' deployment of their staff, particularly in the area of scheduling teachers' time. A complaint in seven of the nine initiatives was that teachers who had invested a substantial amount of time planning and training together were not able to share a common planning period during the school day or week. This was especially detrimental to those engaged in curriculum writing efforts that required extensive time for collaboration. It was also harmful in professional development initiatives in a curriculum content area in middle schools since subject-area teachers are separated as a result of interdisciplinary house structures. There were a number of cases across all these programs where principals went out of their way to insure time for collaboration, but these were exceptions to the general trend.

An equally serious problem was the failure of many principals to capitalize on investments in professional development by assigning teachers to courses for which they had been trained. A phenomenon detected earlier in the Philadelphia Education Fund's World History Project in the 1980s--where teachers who had labored to create a new ninth grade world history curriculum were sometimes not assigned to teach the course--was repeated in Women in World History where participants had to content themselves with teaching bits and pieces of their curriculum in other courses. Middle grades teachers who were trained to teach eighth grade algebra in The Algebra Project had a similar experience: of the 17 teachers trained in the initial group, only 10 were assigned to teach a for-credit algebra course the following year. Of the 23 teachers trained in the second cohort, only nine ended up teaching eighth grade algebra.

Similarly, in seven of the nine initiatives, evaluators cited the dispersion of project team members into different school units--houses in middle schools and charters in high schools--as a significant barrier to program implementation. Progress in planning and carrying out changes of various sorts depended on teachers meeting together frequently, so their separation into different school units was a serious blow to developing a professional community and getting the work done. In one of the middle school initiatives, teams of teachers had participated in a highly acclaimed Seminar on Integrated Curriculum. Yet five of the six teams were unable to implement an experimental curriculum on their return to the school because they were not scheduled to teach together.

Principals did this for a variety of reasons. Some operated out of a belief that program dissemination would occur if the active teachers were distributed around the school. Others worried that a team might be perceived as privileged or elitist by their peers if they stayed together, especially since most initiatives added resources of various kinds to their efforts. Still other principals appeared to split up teachers because this newly-empowered group, often made up of the savviest and most energetic of the school's teachers, represented a threat to their authority. In many instances the principal separated the team simply because other programmatic priorities took precedence in scheduling.

In a few cases, ethnographers noted that principals thought it was a good idea in principle to break up teams of teachers who were friends. Yet a review of these evaluations demonstrates that friendship and close working relationships prior to the start of an initiative was a key factor in predicting its success. Teachers who already had started working together collaboratively--often through a small grant to teachers from the Philadelphia Education Fund--were more likely to take full advantage of new and more ambitious professional development efforts. They formed a core group that sparked the effort and expanded it to a larger group of teachers or even to an entire staff in the case of a few elementary schools. Yet friendship was not necessarily viewed by principals as a resource to be nurtured.

The separation of team members struggling to launch or institutionalize an initiative was especially problematic in middle schools since it took place in the context of constant reorganization and change during the first half of the 1990s. The evaluators of the Science Resource Leaders program highlighted this problem:

> For middle school teachers (particularly in the upper grades), the shifting notions of what works in middle schools and chronic administrative turnover leads to yearly reorganizations which means teaching under different conditions (e.g. lab as a separate class or integrated) with different kinds of kids (regular ed or special ed) and at different grade levels each year. These constant changes force teachers to focus more on adapting to shifting logistics than pedagogy.

In sum, the impact of professional development initiatives on a school was conditioned to a large extent by the degree to which principals themselves became part of a collegial effort and whether they fostered opportunities for staff to interact together to carry out its objectives.

Principal Turnover

The frequent change in principals of schools participating in reform efforts, a problem reported by evaluators and documenters in six of the nine programs, was also damaging to the fate of reform efforts in the school building. It is fair to say that of those schools whose implementation of the initiative was barely noticeable, a common explanation was the yearly change in principals. It was not uncommon for a school to have had three different principals over three or four years, and

there were occasional instances where schools had three principals in a single year. Under those conditions, it was a near impossibility to pull off any serious attempt at change. Examples from the Philadelphia Education Fund's initiatives provide evidence of the frequency of this problem:

- In a whole-school change initiative focused on curricular change in seven schools, the three schools with the lowest levels of implementation were all characterized by turnover in the principalship;
- In an interdisciplinary curriculum-writing program based in three middle schools, all three lost their principals over the three years of the effort, substantially weakening its impetus.
- Principals turned over in three out of the five middle schools profiled in case studies of a district-wide science professional development effort, an initiative where principals' support was crucial to the work of school teams.

Needless to say, attempts at creating cohesive staff cultures focused on school improvement were disrupted by this sort of instability of leadership. There were cases where the arrival of a new principal was an important positive change for the school but the overall pattern of turnover--a taken-for-granted feature of school life in Philadelphia--was detrimental to organizational learning and professional community building. The problem is especially acute because established practice in the District dictates that vacancies be filled only by personnel already in the system, thereby setting off a chain reaction of transfers among principals when an opening occurs.

Team Instability

In eight of the nine programs reported here, reform efforts foundered at a number of schools because the original members of a school team participating in professional development programs left the school. Turnover was most often caused by voluntary or involuntary transfers of teachers to other schools or by retirements. This period was especially turbulent because of a statewide early retirement program available to teachers and administrators in 1993. This sort of staffing instability is a chronic feature of urban systems and a well-documented threat to school-based reform efforts (Fullan,1990; Lewis, 1995; Pink, 1989). In these initiatives, heavy investments in staff training were lost as a result of these key departures and emergent efforts at creating a collegial professional community were damaged.

A few examples from the Philadelphia Education Fund's initiatives illustrate the point. One program officer's report describes the beginning of the demise of a whole-school change project in a middle school that had showed early signs of promise:

> During the grant planning grant period, the staff at the school did a tremendous amount of work. This energy continued through the beginning of the school year. By October, the team seemed burned out. The loss of two strong team members, one who moved to the high school level and another injured in an automobile accident, has been felt strongly. Each

played important roles in the life of the team.

This same report described the staff turnover at another of the six middle schools in this well-funded project:

> This year the school was assigned 20+ new teachers and two new assistant principals. Many of these appointments occurred well into the school year and are therefore not permanent. It is likely that there will be another significant turnover in staff in the 1994-95 school year.

In another middle school initiative, focused on interdisciplinary curriculum-writing, turnover of team members who had spent three full weeks together in the summer plagued implementation in two of the three schools. Elementary school initiatives were more likely to be successful in part because of lower rates of staffing instability.

Work Rules in the Teachers' Union Contract

It is not just administrative policies but teachers' union work rules as well that fragment and separate school staffs. These rules are so deeply ingrained and taken for granted that they were rarely mentioned in evaluation reports yet they were an underlying issue in every reform initiative reported in this review. We do not attempt to explain why these rules developed in the first place or what solutions might look like, but we flag them as serious barriers to reform.

Opportunities for sustained collegial work among school staff were constrained by stipulations in the teachers' union contract that specify work hours and requirements for additional compensation for extra work. According to the current contract between the School District of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers (PFT), the teacher day lasts 6 hours and 15 minutes. The school year for teachers is 190 days, which includes 5 non-student days (8:45 am to 3:00 pm) for planning and professional development. (Two are generally used just before school opens and a third after the students have left at the end of the school year.) Teachers may not be required to participate in more than two night activities during a school year.

Schools have an additional 20 hours per year to arrange as they wish for small and large group meetings for professional development. Outside of these specified times, teachers cannot be required to attend staff meetings unless they are paid $20.88 per hour for doing so. It sometimes happens that schools forego regular faculty meetings during the school year in order to dedicate their 20 discretionary hours to professional development, leaving principals or other school leaders no chance to call the staff together before or after school unless they are paid.

The contract further guarantees teachers one preparation period per school day; they cannot be required to allocate that time to professional development activities. The District also grants

teachers one observation/conference day per year for purposes of professional development providing the school can pay for substitute service. These limits on teachers' time for meeting make it difficult to mount a serious and sustained reform initiative unless substantial additional funds are available from categorical grants (such as Title 1) or grants from external private or public funders. In most professional development initiatives, a significant part of the budget is allocated for stipends to pay teachers to stay after school or attend weekend or summer workshops. It is not uncommon for teachers to meet without pay or for funders to stipulate that dollars not be used for stipends. But the prevailing operational culture in the District's schools is that teachers must be paid for meeting outside of contractually-specified times. This means, for example, that contractual "early-release days" (students leave mid-day) allocated to professional development generally end exactly at the allotted time, leaving only one to three hours for actual work. Some principals and their staffs come up with creative attempts to find time for collaboration, such as adding a few minutes to the school day in order to "buy time" for a half day of professional development.

Transfer policies, controlled by the contract and by administrative practice, also disrupt collegial relations. Of the 500-700 of the District's teachers (4-6 percent of the teaching workforce) who transfer each year, approximately 20 percent of them do so voluntarily, a process written into the contract and determined by seniority. In a system with as many schools as Philadelphia, the probability of transferring is far greater than it is in smaller districts. About 30 percent of all transfers involve first year teachers hired after September 1st. They are automatically reassigned to another school at the end of the school year. This means that efforts made to acculturate these new teachers to the school and to site-based reform initiatives are a wasted investment from the standpoint of the school. The remaining transfers are caused by fluctuations in student enrollment and "position tradeoffs" in schools (e.g. changing the number of teachers by subject area). As discussed earlier, transfers can derail some of the most promising initiatives.

Discussion and Conclusions

This review of program evaluations across nine separate school-change initiatives in Philadelphia supports Schneider and Bryk's (1995a,b) contention that the social capital formed in schools when co-workers are active participants in the building's "civil society " is a critical ingredient for organizational effectiveness. Schools lacking common norms, networks and trust have great difficulty implementing reform. Our examination of program results reveals a deeply ingrained set of practices that, taken together, help explain why reform efforts falter when they go beyond the individual to the school level. We have identified a set of variables common to these initiatives that prevent school faculties and their administrators from coming together on a regular and sustained basis to implement changes in teaching, learning, and governance. Like others before us, we found that the solitary nature of teachers' work was reinforced through prevailing practices regarding

scheduling, assignment, and transfer of professional personnel and compensation policies. Yet without extensive and ongoing opportunities for interaction and collaborative work, school staffs cannot create a culture of reflection and renewal that is so desperately needed in inner city schools.

It is true that staff collegiality can be "contrived", "balkanized," and superficial (Hargreaves, 1992, 1994) or ignore teachers' need for creative artistry (Hargreaves, 1992; Huberman, 1993). And it can interfere with teachers' ability to manage an already-heavy workload (Flinders,1988; Gitlin and Margonis, 1995). Collegiality can even be harmful, especially when it supports a cynical or negative attitude about students, or can be ineffective unless it is focused on improving students' engagement in learning and actual academic achievement (Shouse, 1995). But when staff work together to articulate and enforce schoolwide high expectations for students, to coordinate teaching methods, to improve their technical competence, and to establish a sense of collective accountability for student learning, as Newmann and Wehlage have shown (1995), student academic outcomes are boosted. In schools where children's failure is endemic--in Philadelphia only half the ninth graders are eligible for promotion to the tenth grade, for example--this sort of collaborative endeavor is crucial if outcomes are to change.

The forces militating against sustained collaboration and its resultant accumulation of trust are strong in Philadelphia an other large urban systems. The notion that social capital is a scarce and treasured resource deserving of nurturance has yet to drive the actions of most school leaders. Urban schools are characterized by frequent disruptions in social relations at several levels: turnover of superintendents of schools (averaging 2 to 3 years on the job), rotation of principals and other top administrators, and reassignment of teachers to other schools or to other units within schools. Friendships among staff members are not necessarily seen as a resource to be built on, and newly-trained teams of teachers--whose professional development was often supported by a substantial infusion of external dollars--are often separated during the school year. Thus, reform efforts must devote serious attention to altering the policies that deplete precious social capital and identify ways to enhance it.

As it is, creative principals and teacher leaders devise ways to work around the established culture of isolation. Schools characterized by a culture of collaboration focused on student learning do exist and, indeed, were present in our studies. But their leaders were swimming against the tide. Their collaborative cultures were fragile and could easily wither with the departure of key personnel. The promise of systemic reform--represented in Philadelphia by *Children Achieving*, Superintendent David W. Hornbeck's sweeping plan for school reform--is that those who have ingeniously fought the prevailing culture of private practice may now feel they are swimming with the tide.

Hornbeck's reform agenda carries with it the potential to support greater associational life in the

system in several important ways: 1) small learning communities of 200-500 students are in the process of being created in all schools in the District, structural features that are intended to develop a more caring and continuous learning experience for students and greater collaboration among teachers; 2) sufficient numbers of faculty are hired before school starts in the fall, allowing students to be assigned to their courses by the end of the second week of school, thereby ending the long-held practice of "leveling" classes in October and the reassigning of hundreds of teachers to accommodate enrollment fluctuations; 3) schools are now being organized into K-12 feeder clusters (22 in all of which 6 are in full operation) to promote regular interaction, coordinated planning, and a sense of community among teachers and principals who instruct a common cohort of students; and 4) time for professional development is being increased, paid for in part by a substantial infusion of funds from external sources, notably the five-year $50 million Annenberg Challenge Grant and its matching funds. These are all encouraging signs that lead us to hope that future evaluations will report greater progress in program implementation.

To conclude, the isolation of school professional personnel undertaking reform stood out for us as we looked across nine program evaluations written within a two-year time frame. The prevalence of practices and policies restricting the development of social capital emerged as real phenomena in explaining chronic problems of implementation of reform, and these continue to resonate for us as we conduct ongoing research in the School District of Philadelphia. Although some of these ways of doing business will be difficult to alter because they require increased resources or represent difficult tradeoffs, others are amenable to change. Indeed, some of the policies described in this paper such as automatically reassigning teachers hired after September 1st to a different school the following year or the frequent rotation of principals would be considered most unusual in other school districts. Administrative practices and union policies are not immutable. Addressing policy change in this area should become a priority if school staffs are to work together rather than trying to reform alone.

REFERENCES

Bryk, A.S., Lee, V.E. & Holland, P.B. (1993). *Catholic schools and the common good.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Cochran-Smith, M. & Lytle, S. L.(1993). *Inside/Outside: Teacher research and knowledge.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Coleman, J.S. (1988). Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology,* 94, 95-120.

Coleman, J.S. (1990). *Foundations of social theory.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Coleman, J.S. & Hoffer, T. (1987). *Public and private high schools.* New York: Basic Books.

Cousins, J.B. & Earl, L.M. (1992). *The case for participatory evaluation.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Evaluation Association, Seattle, WA.

Donahoe, T. (1993). Finding the way: Structure, time, and culture in school improvement. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 75,4, pp. 298-305.

Flinders, D. (1988). Teacher isolation in the new reform. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision,* 5,4, pp. 17-29.

Fukuyama, F. (1995). *Trust: The social virtues and the creation of prosperity.* New York: The Free Press.

Fullan, M.G. (1990). Staff development, innovation, and institutional development. In B. Joyce (Ed.), *Changing school culture through staff development.* (pp. 3-25). 1990 Yearbook. Alexandria, VA: Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Fullan, M.G. (1991). *The new meaning of educational change.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Fullan, M.G. (1996). Turning systemic thinking on its head. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 77,6, pp. 420-423.

Fullan, M.G. & Miles, M.B. (1992). Getting reform right: What works and what doesn't. *Phi Delta Kappan,* 73,10, pp. 745-752.

Gitlin, A. & Margonis, F. (1995). The political aspect of reform: Teacher resistance as good sense. *American Journal of Education,* 103, 377-405.

Hargreaves, A. (1992). Cultures of teaching: A focus for change. In A. Hargreaves & M. Fullan, (Eds.), *Understanding teacher development* (pp. 216-240). New York: Teachers College Press.

Hargreaves, A. (1994). *Changing teachers, changing times.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Huberman, M. (1993). The model of the independent artisan in teachers' professional relations. In J. Little & M. McLaughlin (Eds.), *Teachers' work: Individuals, colleagues, and contexts* (pp.11-50). New York: Teachers College Press.

Katzenbach, J.R. & Smith, D.K. (1993). *The wisdom of teams: Creating high performance organizations.* Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Kruse, S.D., Louis, K.S., & Bryk, A.S. (1994). *Building professional community in schools.* Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

Lawler, E.E. (1992). *The ultimate advantage: Creating the high involvement organization.* San Francisco: Jossey Bass.

Lee, S. (1993). Family structure effects on student outcomes. In B. Schneider and J. Coleman (Eds.), *Parents, their children, and schools* (pp. 43-75). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Lee, V.E. & Smith, J.B. (1996). Collective responsibility for learning and its effects on gains in achievement in early secondary school students. *American Journal of Education*, 104, 103-147.

Lewis, A.C. (1995). *Believing in ourselves: Progress and struggle in urban middle school reform.* New York: Edna McConnell Clark Foundation.

Louis, K.S., Kruse, S.D., & Marks, H.M. (in press). School-wide professional community: Teachers' work, intellectual quality and commitment (Chapter 10). In F. M. Newmann and Associates, *School restructuring and student learning.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Louis, K.S., Marks, H.M., & Kruse S. (1995). *Teachers' professional community in restructuring schools.* Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

Louis, K.S. & Miles, M.B. (1990). *Improving the urban high school: What works and why.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Maeroff, G. I. (1993). *Team building for school change: Equipping teachers for new roles.* New York: Teachers College Press.

Marshall, K. (1993). Teachers and schools: what makes a difference. *Daedalus*, 122, pp. 209-242.

McMullan, B.J. (1994). Charters and restructuring. In M. Fine, (Ed.) , *Chartering urban school reform (pp. 63-77).* New York: Teachers College Press

McLaughlin, M.W. & Talbert, J.E. (1993). How the world of teachers and students challenges policy coherence. In S.H. Furhman (Ed.), *Designing coherent education policy: Improving the system* (pp.220-249). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Morin, R.M., Balz, D., Pearlstein S., Edsall, T.B., Taylor, P. & Broder, D.S. (1996). Reality check: The politics of mistrust. *The Washington Post*, January 28-February 4, p. A1. (Based on survey, "Why don't Americans trust the government?," conducted by *The Washington Post*/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University Survey Project. Series reprints and survey results available from The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation, Menlo Park, California.)

Nadler, D.A., Gerstein, M.S., & Shaw, R.B. (1992). *Organizational architecture: Designs for changing organizations.* San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Newman, M. (1995). "At New York's Bad Schools, Problem Wasn't Just Money." *New York*

Times, October 25, 1995, p. A1.

Newmann, F. M. & Wehlage, G.G. (1995). *Successful school restructuring.* Madison, WI: Center on Organization and Restructuring of Schools.

Pink, W. (1989). *Effective development for urban school improvement.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Purnell, S. & Hill, P. (1992). *Time for reform.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

Putnam, R.D. (1993). *Making democracy work: Civic traditions in modern Italy.* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Putnam, R.D. (1995a). Bowling alone: America's declining social capital. *Journal of Democracy,* January.

Putnam, R.D. (1995b). The strange disappearance of civic America. *The American Prospect.*, 24, Winter.

Schneider, B. (1993). Parents, their children, and schools: An introduction. In B. Schneider and J. S. Coleman (Eds.), *Parents, their children, and schools* (pp. 1-12). Boulder, CO: Westview Press.

Schneider, B. & Bryk, A.S. (1995a). *Social capital in the community and schools.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Washington, D.C.

Schneider, B. & Bryk, A.S. (1995b). *Trust as a moral resource: Constructive social relations in urban school communities.* Paper presented at the meeting of the Invitational Conference on Social Capital, University of Wisconsin, Madison, WI.

Sebring, P.B., Bryk, A.S., & Easton, J.Q. (1995). *Charting reform: Chicago teachers take stock.* Chicago, ILL: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

Shouse, R.C. (1995). *Communalist visions of American schooling: Historic themes, enduring tensions.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Sociological Association, Washington, D.C.

Stevenson, H.W. & Stigler, J.W. (1992). *The learning gap: Why our schools are failing and what we can learn from Japanese and Chinese education.* New York: Summit Books.

Stringfield, S.C. (1994). Identifying and addressing organizational barriers to reform. In R.J. Rossi (Ed.), *Schools and students at risk* (pp. 277-295). New York: Teachers College Press.

Stringfield, S.C. & Teddlie, C. (1991). Observers as predictors of schools' multi-year outlier status. *Elementary School Journal,* 91, 357-376.

Talbert, J.E. & McLaughlin, M.W. (1994). Teacher professionalism in local school context. *American Journal of Education,* 102, 123-153.

Useem, E.L, Buchanan, J., Meyers, E. & Maule-Schmidt. (1995). *Urban Teacher Curriculum Networks and Systemic Change*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association, San Francisco, CA.

Vogel, M.J. & Abrahams-Goldberg, E. (1994). The professional development school as a strategy for school restructuring. In M. Fine (Ed.), *Chartering urban school reform* (pp. 47-62). New York: Teachers College Press.

Watts, G.D. & Castle, S. (1993). The time dilemma in school restructuring. *Phi Delta Kappan, 75,4, pp. 306-310.*

Appendix

Evaluation and Documentation Reports

Conducted for

The Philadelphia Education Fund[1]

Eighth Grade Algebra in the Philadelphia School District (1989-1994), Lynne Kielhorn, 1994.

Arts Empower: Portrait of a Summer Institute for Teachers, Laura M. Carpenter, 1994

The Arts Empower Program: Documentation Reports, Andrew Gelber, 1994 and 1995

Caught Between Two Worlds: A Professional Development Initiative in Multicultural Education, Cati Coe, 1994

**Renewing Schools: A Report on the Cluster Initiative in Philadelphia*, Elizabeth L. Useem, 1994

Summary of Crossing the Boundaries Focus Group Interviews, Jolley B. Christman, Elaine Simon, Research for Action, 1993.

**Crossing the Boundaries: Teaching and Learning as Avenues Toward Middle School Renewal*, Linda Friedrich and Suzanne Lynch, 1993.

Focus Group Interview of Crossing the Boundaries Participants, Alisa Belzer, Jolley B. Christman, Elaine Simon, Research for Action, 1994.

**Philadelphia Library Power: Annual Report Narrative*, Sandra Hughes, 1995

**The Philadelphia Library Power Project: Year 1*, Sandra Hughes, 1995

**Mid-Year Status Report on Partners in Change*, Linda Friedrich and Emily Meyer, 1994

A Report to PATHS/PRISM on Partners in Change, Frances Riemer, Eva Gold, Elaine Simon, Research for Action, 1995

School Feedback Memos, Partners in Change, Research for Action, 1995

**End of Year Two Evaluation, Partners in Change*, Shereese Williamson, 1995

An Evaluation of the Science Resource Leaders Program, Alisa Belzer with Jolley B. Christman and Elaine Simon, Research for Action, 1995

Women in World History, Year Two Evaluation, Catherine Higgins, 1994

Report on Women in World History Project, Year Three, Frances Riemer, 1995.

*Internal documentation reports by Philadelphia Education Fund staff.

[1] The studies reported here were all commissioned by PATHS/PRISM: The Philadelphia Partnership for Education prior to its 1995 merger with the Philadelphia Schools Collaborative to form the Philadelphia Education Fund.